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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL  
1271<sup>ST</sup> MEETING

1 APRIL 2025  
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/BN.1271 (2025)

**BRIEFING NOTE**

**COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL MINE AWARENESS DAY AND ADDRESSING EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS IN POPULATED AREAS (EWIPA)**

## COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL MINE AWARENESS DAY AND ADDRESSING EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS IN POPULATED AREAS (EWIPA)

### I. BACKGROUND

1. The United Nations (UN) General Assembly declared that April 4 of each year would be officially observed as International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2005. The decision calls for continued efforts by states to help establish and develop national mine-action capacities in countries where antipersonnel landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) continue to pose a serious threat to the safety, health and lives of people, and hinder social and economic development at the national and local levels.

2. At the 5<sup>th</sup> Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, held in Siem Reap, Cambodia in November 2024, State Parties adopted a declaration which reaffirmed their determination to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines. They also expressed their aspiration to fully achieve the goals of the Convention by 2029. The Conference resulted in the adoption of the Siem Reap-Angkor Declaration on a Mine-Free World, and the Siem Reap-Angkor Plan of Action. This Plan includes several key actions, such as requiring Member States to establish sustainable national capacities that can coordinate, regulate, and manage the national Mine Action programmes. These programs should cover activities including survey, clearance, mine risk education, victim assistance and undertake post-completion efforts. Additionally, Member States must be prepared to respond to the discovery of previously unknown or newly mined areas.

3. Similarly, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA) presents a significant threat to civilians worldwide, particularly in conflict-affected regions.

4. In this regard, the current meeting of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) aims to raise awareness about landmines and the progress in providing Member States with assistance in Mine Action, as well as to highlight the threats posed by Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA) and discuss concrete measures to protect civilians from their effects.

### II. CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF LANDMINES IN AFRICA

5. Antipersonnel landmines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERWs) pose a significant barrier to development, lying dormant yet dangerous for decades after conflicts end. These hazards restrict rural communities from accessing contaminated land, a critical resource for their livelihoods. To ensure equal opportunities for all communities, demining efforts must be prioritized.

6. This requires national legislation on victim assistance so that the necessary national institutions are established and resources allocated. Policies should enable countries to develop national plans for victim assistance and not approach it only from the angle of medical assistance or physical rehabilitation, but include addressing needs for social and economic reintegration or psychological support.

7. The AU continues to support Member States in clearing landmines and ERW. Despite these efforts, some countries have not yet fulfilled their mine-clearance obligations.

8. Currently, at least 22 AU Member States are reported to be contaminated with landmines, including Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sahrawi Republic, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Egypt, Libya,

Central African Republic (CAR), Senegal, Mauritania, Morocco and Zimbabwe, and others facing ongoing armed conflicts are suspected of experiencing new cases of landmine contamination.

9. The following twelve (12) AU Member States Party to the Convention have completed their demining of antipersonnel landmines since the adoption of the Treaty in 1997: Namely: Algeria, Burundi, Republic of Congo, Djibouti, The Gambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Swaziland, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia.

### **III. ONGOING AU SUPPORT TO AU MEMBER STATES DEMINING EFFORTS**

10. The AU Commission has remained committed to engaging with partners, including the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) of the Mine Ban Convention and United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS); ICRC, and Operators like The HALO Trust and Mines Advisory Group (MAG) with the objective to provide direct assistance to the contaminated Member States in the various areas of Mine Action.

11. In response to requests from Member States for technical and financial support in Mine Action, the AU Commission, in close collaboration with UNMAS, conducted two assessment missions in 2024, one to Guinea-Bissau and another to Zimbabwe.

12. The missions aimed to assess the current status of demining efforts and encourage relevant partners to mobilize technical and financial support to strengthen Mine clearance in both countries. Although the allocations for Mine Action activities in annual budgets are limited, the Commission is working to follow up on the recommendations from these assessments and mobilize additional funds from partners.

13. The Commission has reviewed the Mine Action and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) Strategic Framework Project Document for 2014-2017 and aims to collaborate with partners to facilitate its update, incorporating inputs from Member States' experts.

### **IV. AU EFFORTS TO ADDRESS IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES (IEDS)**

14. AU Member States, and the international community at large, are also paying greater attention to the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and booby-traps (sometimes considered as improvised mines). These weapons are primarily being used by non-state armed groups. Some of the IEDs are detonated through contact with person meeting the definition of an antipersonnel mine as contained in the Mine Ban Treaty. However, others are vehicle borne and may detonate on impact or when manually activated or may be remotely activated.

15. The African Union (AU) Commission has developed a draft Counter Improvised Explosive Devices (C-IED) Policy designed to mobilize technical expertise for Member States and AU Peace Support Operations (AU PSOs) in preventing, countering, and responding to the increasing threat of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). Once funding becomes available, this strategy will be presented to Member States' experts, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and relevant AU entities for their input and to ensure collective ownership and effective implementation.

### **V. EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS IN POPULATED AREAS (EWIPA), CLOSELY RELATED TO LANDMINE THREATS**

16. Armed conflicts are increasingly occurring in populated and urbanized areas, with weapons designed for open battlefields being used in these settings. The use of explosive weapons in populated

areas (EWIPA) poses significant threats to civilians globally, particularly in conflict-affected regions such as Africa, as recently observed in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

17. The use of EWIPA in recent armed conflicts has had profound and wide-ranging impacts on civilians, far beyond the immediate toll of death, physical injury, and disability. These attacks severely disrupt health-care facilities and services, impairing access to medical treatment, while also causing indirect or reverberating effects that are just as devastating. Damage to critical infrastructure—such as water and electrical facilities and their supply networks—disrupts essential services that civilians depend on for survival, often leading to disease outbreaks and additional deaths. These consequences are particularly severe when EWIPA are used over prolonged periods, intensifying the suffering and destruction and triggering displacement. The use of explosive weapons in populated areas undermines the African Agenda 2063, contributing to state fragility and insecurity and undermining development efforts.

18. In response to this security and development threat, the PSC of the AU, in its 859th meeting held on 17 July 2019, dedicated an open session to the theme “*Protection of Civilians from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA)*.” This session was part of the AUC’s contribution to promoting active African participation in the global process of developing a declaration on the use of EWIPA.

19. In November 2022, states, with significant involvement from many African countries and in partnership with civil society organizations, and international organizations developed the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the humanitarian consequences arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (the Declaration). The Declaration has now been formally endorsed by 87 countries, including AU Member States.

20. States who endorsed the EWIPA Political Declaration are committed to 'enhancing the protection of civilians and civilian objects during and after armed conflict, addressing the humanitarian consequences arising from armed conflict involving the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, and improving compliance with and implementation of applicable International Humanitarian Law.

21. There is a need to raise greater awareness of the EWIPA Political Declaration within the African continent to encourage its endorsement by more African countries. Currently, only 11 African states, including the Central African Republic, Cote d’Ivoire, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo have endorsed the Declaration. This endorsement would be in line with previous AU PSC statements and with African States’ commitment, within the framework of the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by 2030 and intensify the efforts to prevent and end armed conflicts in Africa.

## **VI. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

22. Comprehensive normative frameworks/instruments relating to Mine Action have been adopted at the global level, and decisions adopted at Continental level. The contaminated AU Member States party to the Mine Ban Treaty have also continued to deploy various efforts to meet their obligations under the Treaty. However, in spite of these efforts, there remains a daunting task for contaminated Member States to accomplish their Mine clearance obligations. Similarly, the implementation of victim assistance is experiencing persistent challenges, including lack of finances.

23. The escalating threat of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) also poses significant humanitarian challenges and hampers socioeconomic development across Africa.

24. In addition, the Council notes that the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA) poses significant risks to civilians and has similar devastating humanitarian consequences like anti-personnel mines. Both landmines and explosive weapons used in populated areas can result in long-lasting destruction, hinder post-conflict recovery, and cause significant loss of life, particularly among non-combatants. In this regard, the Council may wish to decide the following:

- a) **Encourage** those AU Member States that have not yet signed/ratified the APMBBC, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its additional Protocols, and the Cluster Munition Convention, to do so and adopt national legislation to support local communities from becoming a victim of mines, cluster mutations and other remnants of war.
- b) **Express concern** over the continuing threat posed by anti-personnel mines, Explosive Remnants of War (ERW), and the growing danger of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), along with their devastating humanitarian consequences and impact on social and economic development.
- c) **Emphasize** the need to continue promoting the concept of national ownership over Mine Action and Explosive Management activities, with Member States holding primary responsibility for developing and implementing national Mine Action programs.
- d) **Express concern** over the inadequate funding hindering demining efforts in countries contaminated with landmines and ERW, forcing these nations to drastically scale back their Mine Action programs and clearance operations. This has contributed to the failure of these countries to meet their Article 5 obligations under the Mine Ban Convention.
- e) **Call for the urgent** establishment of a continental mechanism for Mine Action, responsible for coordinating and supporting the demining efforts of Member States, raising awareness on anti-personnel mines and explosive threats, advocating for victim assistance, and mobilizing and directing resources for response measures.
- f) **Commend** successful experiences in landmine clearance that present opportunities to share information, best practices, and technologies, and contribute to capacity building within the framework of South-South cooperation.
- g) **Strongly recommends** that the AU Commission and international partners provide comprehensive support to African Union Member States in their Mine Action programs. This support should encompass technical assistance, financial resources, and capacity-building initiatives to effectively address the challenges posed by landmines and IEDs.
- h) **Emphasize** the urgent need for the AU Commission to share the updated AU Strategy on landmines and ERW, as well as the draft AU Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices (C-IED) Strategy, with Member States' experts for review and validation.
- i) **Ensure** that the mobilization of technical and financial support for contaminated countries considers addressing obsolete explosives and ammunition to prevent unplanned explosions.
- j) **Strongly urge Member States** to advance Mine clearance technologies through partnerships among humanitarian, private, and academic sectors as a useful tool to further explore to effectively address weapon contamination.

- k) **Emphasize** the urgent need to enhance risk education as vital coupled with actions that enable communities to live more safely in contaminated areas linked with longer-term programs.
- l) **Emphasize** on the need to address the permanent needs of Mine survivors and their families, including Physical Rehabilitation Program which addresses both psychological and physical recovery and rehabilitation.
- m) **Call on Member States** to urgently review and adapt military policies and practices and adopt an avoidance policy with the effect that explosive weapons with a wide impact area should not be used in populated areas unless sufficient mitigation measures are taken to limit their wide area effects and the consequent risk of civilian harm.
- n) **Encourage** the Commission to support Member States in gaining a clear understanding of the humanitarian impacts of explosive weapons in populated areas, the relevance of the related Political Declaration, and the policy and practical changes it seeks to generate.
- o) **Encourage Member States** to endorse the EWIPA Political Declaration ahead of the second international conference in Costa Rica in November 2025.
- p) **Encourage Member States** to participate actively in the preparations for the second international conference on the Political Declaration, including by drafting a Common Plan of Action outlining steps in support of the Declaration.

25. The Meeting will be held physically on Tuesday, 1 April 2025, starting at 10:00 a.m., Addis Ababa Local time in the Plenary Hall, Old Conference Centre, and it will be conducted in two AU's official languages: English and French.